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July 12, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: Al Haig

DOS, DOJ Reviews
Completed

SUBJECT: Items to Discuss with the Attorney General,
2:30 p. m. , Saturday, July 12, 1969

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

Introduction

-- Advise Mr. Mitchell that you have requested meeting to discuss with him what you consider to be a most serious situation with respect to the President's relationships with the Secretary of State and your role in serving the President as his foreign policy adviser.

-- Point out that you have asked Colonel Haig to join the discussion because as a professional officer with considerable high level experience, he will be able to comment on the problem as an unbiased observer of the Washington scene over the past 8 years. You have asked Colonel Haig to interject his personal comments at any time if he feels that your presentation of the facts are either inaccurate or a distortion of the critical issues.

Discussion

-- State that at the outset of the Administration the President had certain assets available to him which had to be carefully nurtured and intelligently and systematically integrated into an overall Game Plan for achieving U. S. objectives in both the short and the long term.

-- On a short term basis, these assets were of critical importance for the achievement of an acceptable solution to the Vietnam conflict and on a longer term basis, these assets had to provide the means by which the President's long term objectives could be achieved.

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-- For this reason, at the outset of the Administration the general outlines of U. S. short term and long term policies were reviewed in a National Security Council and the President promulgated an overall conceptual framework for proceeding, giving major emphasis to efforts designed to achieve a settlement to the Vietnam conflict. In its broadest context, this framework called for:

(1) A new appreciation for the role of the Soviet Union's support for Hanoi with accompanying U. S. tactical and strategic approaches.

(2) A recognition that Soviet interests and anxieties should be manipulated to work for the U. S. Government, with the view toward influencing the Soviets to exert maximum pressure on Hanoi to achieve an acceptable solution to the conflict. Pressure points included: (a) recognition of Soviet concern for growing tension with Communist China, (b) the actual or apparent concern of the Soviets to arrive at early understandings which might crystallize parity with the U. S. in the area of strategic forces, (c) a recognition that Soviet interests in the Middle East might be jeopardized by the uncontrolled and volatile forces in the area which could prematurely trigger an Arab-Israeli conflict at a time and under circumstances not acceptable to the Soviets, (d) an appreciation for the Soviet's overall concern in retaining discipline within the Communist camp, especially as it pertained to the separatists' movements in Eastern Europe, and (e) a recognition of internal economic and bureaucratic divergencies within the Soviet Union itself.

-- Inter alia, the above Soviet concerns constituted what could be considered U. S. assets in seeking our short term and long term objectives. As a result, the President approved in concept a short term approach which would involve a somewhat harder attitude toward the Soviet Union, which would involve a patient and reserved attitude toward movement in those areas of Soviet interest until the Soviets had, in turn, indicated a willingness to reciprocate in areas of prime concern to the U. S. Government. This involved:

(1) A carefully measured U. S. approach to SALT negotiations being urged by the Soviets.

(2) A carefully measured and flexible demeanor toward the Middle East crisis.

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(3) A slowdown of bridge building actions set in train by the previous Administration, especially in the area of trade.

(4) Carefully worked out U. S. initiatives to increase Soviet concern that the U. S. and Communist China were moving closer together against the Soviet Union and,

(5) A carefully developed Game Plan for a solution to the Vietnam conflict which would seek to retain the viability of the Saigon regime, at least to the degree that Saigon would have an opportunity to compete for survival in the post-settlement political competition in South Vietnam.

-- The above factors constitute the Presidentially approved framework upon which U. S. policy in the short term would be pursued. Despite the fact that Secretary of State was provided a detailed guidance on countless occasions, including formal NSC meetings, a personal letter from the President to the Secretary of State and countless detailed specific instructions, he has consistently worked along lines contrary to this conceptual approach and systematically dissipated those assets available to the President.

-- We have discussed State efforts to steamroller early SALT negotiations.

-- You have also recounted for the Attorney General, State efforts to inject the U. S. into the Middle East situation in such a way that our flexibility would be seriously jeopardized.

-- With respect to stated Presidential policy on trade with the Soviet Bloc and specifically the "Most Favored Nation Clause," State has, in recent weeks, repeatedly attempted to circumvent the President's stated policy.

-- With respect to Vietnam, Secretary Rogers has systematically diverged from Presidential guidance with respect to:

(1) The pace of Vietnamization.

(2) The level of pressure applied to the Saigon regime to broaden its base.

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(3) Tactical approaches in Paris, specifically as they pertain to the conduct of private talks both in timing and substance.

(4) Approach to the issue of ceasefire.

(5) Approach to the issue of de-escalation.

The above difficulties have not been the result of a coherently articulated disagreement by Secretary Rogers with the overall framework of U.S. policy but rather manifest themselves in countless variations from approved Presidential policy in patterns which are primarily tactical but which have had the overall effect of seriously denuding all of the President's foreign policy assets. In recent weeks, the pace and style of Rogers' freewheeling has increased in tempo. Recent divergencies include:

(1) An apparent decision on the part of the Secretary to bypass the White House in major policy areas.

(2) A situation which finds countless carefully worked out policy issues being leaked to the press, with increasing regularity.

(3) Unwillingness in those instances where White House clearances are requested, to accept substantive realignment of cables without escalating the issue to the Secretary's level, placing the Assistant to the President in a position of accepting State language or forcing an undesirable Presidential confrontation with the Secretary.

Cite Most Recent Specific Examples

1. Undue pressure on Thieu to give forthcoming political statement. Show cable Tab A.

2. Undue pressure on Thieu with respect to the substance of his talk. Show cable Tab B. (The Thieu speech is at Tab C).

3. Discuss problems in the development of the President's statement in support of Thieu's speech. (President's statement is at Tab D. Secretary Rogers' statement commenting on the Gromyko speech is at Tab E). Make the point that Rogers' statement was released

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within two hours of the President's statement supporting Thieu; that it was done without any coordination with the White House and prior to the Secretary's having read the full text of Gromyko's statement. Procedurally, it tended to detract from the impact of the President's statement but more seriously, it again diverged from foreign policy guidance with respect to U. S. -Soviet relations and was counter to our recent efforts to recoup additional assets on the Soviet-China issue. (Romania visit).

4. Discuss Secretary's blatant attempt to circumvent the President's written directive to convene another private meeting in Paris. President's directive at Tab F. Draft cable forwarded last evening at Tab G.

Conclusions

While any of the individual incidents outlined above might be passed over as isolated though serious breaches of discipline by the Secretary, in sum, they represent a fundamental disloyalty to Presidential policy which has the most serious implications for the U. S. national interest. They have stripped the President of a large measure of his ability to conduct foreign policy in a coherent and effective way and, based on these facts, you believe that it is essential that the President move swiftly and decisively before it is too late.

-- Courses of action which are open vary from:

- (1) a direct ultimatum by the President to the Secretary demanding adherence to the established policy and requiring coordination with the White House on policy matters or resignation.
- (2) If the above is not acceptable to the President, you would be willing to step down or even to assume an essentially non-substantive role, which would give the Secretary of State the kind of leeway which he apparently has assumed to be his prerogative.

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-- In either event, the situation is now intolerable since the national interest will no longer permit the type of freewheeling, undisciplined and at times disloyal style followed by Secretary Rogers. The situation has progressed to the point that members of the State staff have brought this to your attention and you are soliciting the Attorney General's assistance in bringing this to the attention of the President without delay.

Attachments

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